

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1.(Currently Amended) A method of performing a knee-joint replacement surgery involving a tibia and femur, the method comprising:

positioning the tibia and the femur such that ~~the~~a knee joint is disposed in a bent position;

incising skin and flesh layers to expose the knee-joint;

positioning a retractor support extending along at least opposite sides of the knee joint;

retracting the skin and flesh layers proximate the knee-joint utilizing a plurality of retractors attached to the retractor support with at least one of the retractors being attached to the retractor support such that the retractor may be flexed sufficiently to be able to move the knee-joint during the surgery without repositioning the retractors.

2.(Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the retractor support is mounted to the surgical table.

3.(Original) The method of claim 2 wherein the retractor support is mounted to a rail of the surgical table.

4.(Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the at least one of the retractors is attached to the retractor support with a flexible cord.

5.(Original) The method of claim 4 wherein the flexible cord is attached to the retractor support by engaging a member that is rigidly attached to the retractor support, the member having a V-shaped groove wherein the cord engages the groove.

6.(Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the retractor support includes two support arms, each arm extending along an opposite side of the knee-joint.

7.(Original) The method of claim 6 and further including positioning the support arms below the knee-joint.

8.(Original) The method of claim 1 wherein each of the plurality of retractors are attached to the retractor support in a manner that each of the retractors may be flexed so that the knee joint may be moved during surgery without repositioning the retractors.

9.(Currently Amended) An apparatus for use in performing a knee-joint replacement surgery on a surgical table, the surgery involving a tibia and femur joined at a knee joint, the apparatus comprising:

a retractor support rigidly mounted to the surgical table; and

a plurality of retractors attached to the retractor support and each having a

retractor blade for engaging skin and flesh layers proximate the knee-joint wherein at least one of the retractors has a flexible portion that flexes sufficiently so that the tibia may be moved during the surgery without having to re-engage the retractors with the flesh and skin layers or to reattach the retractors to the retractor support or adjust the retractor support.

10.(Original) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the surgical table includes a rail and wherein the retractor support is rigidly mounted to the rail of the surgical table.

11.(Original) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the at least the one of the retractors includes a flexible cord attached to the retractor blade, the cord having a free end that is securable to the retractor support.

12.(Original) The apparatus of claim 11 and further including an attaching device fixedly attached to the retractor support and having a V-shaped groove engaging the free end of the cord.

13.(Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the retractor support includes at least two arms, each arm ~~being positioned~~ positionable along opposite sides of the knee joint.

14.(Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the arms of the retractor support are ~~positioned~~ positionable below the knee joint.

15.(Original) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein each of the plurality of retractors has a flexible portion which flexes sufficiently to move the tibia during surgery without having to re-engage the retractors with the flesh and skin layers or reattaching the retractors to the retractor support or adjust the retractor support.

16.(Original) The apparatus of claim 15 wherein each of the retractors includes a flexible cord having a free end that is attachable to the retractor support.

17.(Currently Amended) A method of holding down a lower leg portion during knee surgery, the method comprising:

positioning the knee such that the knee is in an elevated and bent position facing generally upwardly;

positioning a retractor support mounted to a surgical table, the retractor support having first and second arms that extend along opposite sides of the knee; and

positioning a flexible strap extending between distal ends of the first and second arms such that the flexible strap engages the lower leg with a

downward force to retain the lower leg in a selected position during surgery.

18.(Original) The method of claim 17 wherein the retractor support is mounted to a rail of the surgical table.

19.(Currently Amended) An apparatus for use in securing a lower leg in knee surgery on a surgical table wherein ~~the~~ a knee is disposed in an elevated position, the apparatus comprising:

a retractor support mounted to the surgical table wherein the retractor support includes first and second support arms that ~~extend~~ are extendable along opposite sides of the knee, each support arm having distal end portions; and

a flexible strap extending between the distal end portions of the support arms for engaging the lower leg such that a generally downward force is applied against the lower leg to retain the lower leg in position.

20.(Original) The apparatus of claim 19 and further including first and second downwardly extending rigid leg portions extending from the first and second distal end portions of the first and second support arms and wherein the strap is fixedly attached to the first and second leg portions.

21.(Original) The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the strap is attached to the first and second leg portions below where the strap engages the lower leg.

22. (New) The method of claim 17 wherein the flexible strap is attached to the arms at a position below the point in which the strap engages the lower leg for providing the force as applied to the lower leg.